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Laos mission said sabotaged

NEW YORK — A former Green Beret who took part in an undercover mission to Laos to search for American military personnel missing from the Vietnam War yesterday charged the U.S. government sabotaged the attempt.

Charles Patterson, 37, said last November's "Operation Lazarus" failed because a CIA "plant" revealed their position to Pathet Lao communist guerrillas who ambushed the searchers before they could reach their objective.

Asked why the government should want to block efforts to find missing Americans, Patterson, a former member of U.S. Army Special Forces, said: "They don't want to open a can of worms."

Patterson's claims, made in an interview, could not be independently substantiated.

Maj. Bob Shields, the Pentagon's spokesman for Southeast Asian affairs, called the contentions "ludicrous."